

PEOPLE & THINGS By ATTICUS

THE Queen Mother entered the drawing-room and sat at a table with a glass of champagne in front of her. Lord David Cecil, on her left, took a last peep at his notes. The Author, on her right, looked out over the audience with massive calm as we disposed ourselves, standing, round the table. The profile of the seated Lady Diana Cooper had the serene gravity of a head on a Greek white-figure vase.

It was the presentation, in the drawing-room of Sir Roderick and Lady Jones's house in Hyde Park Gate, of the annual Duff Cooper Memorial Prize: an elegantly informal occasion with a flavour—in the huge coal fire, the Christmas tree, the Veuve Clicquot of Edwardian belting.

The Author was Mr. Lawrence Durrell, the poet, who has published four books this year, none of them poetry. He won the award with his Cyprus reminiscences "Bitter Lemons." It is, said Lord David Cecil justly, the kind of book which is extremely well done today: a narrative of fact recorded with poetic feeling.

The Queen Mother spoke touchingly before presenting Mr. Durrell with a specially-bound copy of Duff Cooper's "Old Men Forget." With it went a cheque for £150. Many of the subscribers to the fund were present. They must have been delighted, moved even, by the whole affair.

St. Bride's
NEXT Thursday Her Majesty the Queen will rededicate St. Bride's Church which has risen from its ashes. It was a victim of Hitler's satanic fury when he tried to bomb London into submission.

Sunday night in Fleet Street has an atmosphere all its own. There is none of the week-day grinding traffic which struggles up Ludgate Hill or snarls its way towards Charing Cross. The city is empty, and the clock ticks the hours as if the pavement were their private boudoir. Even the vans which have arrived to take the newspapers to the trains seem in no hurry. But once more we shall hear the clang of the church bell proclaiming the greatest story of all time, the story of the birth and death and resurrection. Even the men who boast that they have sold their souls for printer's ink will pause and will be glad when the bells of St. Bride's ring out once more.

Man of Action

WHEN an aeroplane disaster takes place the tragedy is not confined to the victims and their relatives. I thought of this when, in company with a few others, I listened last week to Sir Reginald Verdon Smith discussing the recent air mishaps to the Britannia. He has played a splendid part in British civil aviation as the Chairman and Joint Managing Director of the Bristol Aeroplane Company and associated concerns.

Sir Reginald is dark, slim and also a former scholar of Brasenose College and until recently Chairman of the Council of Bristol University. One might describe him as a dreamer with the gift of decision.

Every day and every night

the skies are filled with aeroplanes annihilating distance, reducing oceans to lakes, and flattening mountains to ant-hills, but a thousand planes that safely and comfortably conclude their flights do not



Sir Reginald Verdon Smith

make noise. It is the one that falls which shocks and disturbs. No doubt there are moments when Sir Reginald Verdon Smith wishes that he had stayed in the pleasant seclusion of scholarship, but basically he is a man of action. For such there can be no rest.

Versatile

LIKE most of his predecessors the new editor of "Punch," Bernard Hollowood, whom I am happy to claim as a colleague, is another illustration of the fact that humour is nurtured in unexpected places. Before joining the magazine he was a schoolmaster and an economist.

Hollowood came to "Punch" in 1942. Three years later he graduated to "the table," that celebrated Wednesday luncheon in Boulevard Street at which the political cartoon is discussed by selected members of the staff. He remarks that he can think of no reason for his appointment; he is, he says, a very ordinary person and has all the usual vices. "I've done practically everything in my time for 'Punch'—most recently the television review," I can add, what he was too modest to say, that he has given a good many other artists their ideas. "One of the things I am most proud of is being the first cartoonist to appear on the front page of THE SUNDAY TIMES."

Tasting Borsal

LAST week twelve Oxford undergraduates spent five days as voluntary inmates of Hatfield, a Borsal without bars in Yorkshire. They slept in the same dormitories as the boys and lived exactly the same life; morning run at 6.15, an army-style kit lay-out, and a day of work as motor mechanics or garden-makers, or scrubbing floors and digging gardens, followed by two hours of classes in the evening.

One of the group, Edwin Barnes (Pembroke) told me that they found the life energetic, but certainly no harder than basic training in the services. The visit was made as "an experiment in Christian living," following up a camp run on similar lines last summer for undergraduate and Borsal boys, which they are hoping to make an annual event.

The boys, says Barnes, tended at first to think the

whole thing a great joke. They made us apple-pie beds the first night. But on the last night we got in late and found they had made our beds properly for us. On Sunday evening twenty of them came to even-song with us of their own accord, quite an achievement as there was a film show at Hatfield that night."

The undergraduates, says Barnes, grew to know the boys very well and spent much time discussing "sport, sex and all sorts of things." We disagreed about standards of morality but they were particularly interested to find people of their own age who had thought out religious views for themselves."

The Fourth Wall

LAST week I congratulated the Savage Club on its 10th anniversary and paid tribute to its gusto and lack of pomposity. But was it wise to allow the peering eyes of television to intrude upon the anniversary dinner? The answer, or what we heard of them on TV, were much the same as those one encounters all across the banqueting world at this time of year. It is true that Sir Alan Herbert spoke his speech wittily in rhyme, but the rest were no better than one would hear in societies with no claim to wit nor venerability.

The charm of a club is that you get away from the outside world. It was a mistake for the Savages to remove the fourth wall on its great night.

Mr. Reginald Pound, by the way, takes me to task for calling him the "historian of the club." A survey of the Savages' first century by Mr. V. Bradshaw is soon to be published; Aaron Watson's "The Savage Club" is now fifty years old.

Sacrilege

IVOR NEWTON reminds me that the plan to build a tunnel at Hyde Park Corner is not the first time that the integrity of that famous spot has been threatened. A musical enthusiast of some prominence ventured to suggest to King George V that the extreme corner of Buckingham Palace gardens at Hyde Park Corner should be used as a site for a national opera house.

According to Ivor Newton, the Royal anger with which the suggestion was received was both terrifying and impressive. At any rate it is doubtful whether London's opera-lovers, accustomed to the adjoining charms of a vegetable market, could have been lured away from Covent Garden.

The Bowmen

THIS has been a lively year for the Bow Group, that boiling-pot of young Conservative blood. Its latest pamphlet, "Whose Public Schools?" is selling at a vast rate—especially to public schools. The second issue of "Crossbow," the group's new magazine, is due on January 7; it will contain some provocative correspondence from year branches and calls tentatively "unhappy young Conservatives."

Membership of the Bow Group has risen rapidly since the first "Crossbow" was published two months ago. Early next year branches are to be formed at Oxford and Cambridge, and there are also collections of young Conservatives—members must be under

thirty-six—eager to do the same in Edinburgh, Manchester, Liverpool and Aberystwyth. There is already a branch in Birmingham.

James Lemkin, the chairman, says he does not think this group is likely to become unwieldy. "These will be people meeting to do research, which will be incorporated with the London work or published separately. We would like to have ten standing research groups publishing five pamphlets a year—we only publish two or three at the moment. I reckon we can expand up to 1,000 members in London, of whom 300, as compared with about eighty at present, would be doing research."

Men and Horses

YOU may recall that we recently asked why cavalry officers have long been regarded as being less intelligent than those who fought on foot. Among the answers that reached me was the following epistle from Admiral Sir William ("Bubbles") James:

Dear Atticus—I think the reason for regarding cavalry officers as less intelligent than infantry officers was that it was much more expensive to belong to a cavalry regiment than to the sons of noble and wealthy families obtained commissions in the cavalry, which offered a pleasant, lazy life, with plenty of leave, a life in which horses were the main interest. . . . A cavalry officer who studied war was a freak. For the infantry soldier, often living on little more than his pay, the Army was his profession in which he hoped to gain promotion, not just something to occupy his time when not hunting, playing polo or on the social round. So the Honourable Bertie of the Oldtype novel was a young-looking young soldier with a monocle in the "Punch" pictures was always a cavalry officer.

A change took place when Wolsey introduced his reforms and the Staff College was founded. Now that the cavalry are mechanised the tradition has of course died away.

W. M. James.

This is one case where Atticus makes no comment.

Grey Eminence

IT must have been bitterly disappointing to Beryl Grey to go down with a chill last week and to have to put off her first appearance at the Bolshoi Theatre on Friday—Friday the 13th, let me remind readers who believe in ill omens. For to dance "Swan Lake" at the Bolshoi is the peak of honour for a ballerina, a unique one for a British dancer. All ballet-lovers will wish Miss Grey well at tonight's performance.

She leaves immediately afterwards for London, where she is to dance "Giselle" as well as "Swan Lake," and on Christmas Day she opens at Kiev.

The Russians, I hear, have paid her the great honour of presenting her the Desborough Medal to Christopher Davidge. These medals were founded by the Thames Conservators in memory of Lord Desborough, the fabulous athlete, so long their chairman, whose exploits included swimming the Niagara Rapids twice and being elected President of both the Oxford University Boat Club and the Oxford University Athletic Club in the same year.

A Rowing Honour

AT Leander Club last night, the President, Lord Leinster, presented the Desborough Medal to Christopher Davidge. These medals were founded by the Thames Conservators in memory of Lord Desborough, the fabulous athlete, so long their chairman, whose exploits included swimming the Niagara Rapids twice and being elected President of both the Oxford University Boat Club and the Oxford University Athletic Club in the same year.

From time to time the medals are given to a variety of clubs who swim, row, sail or otherwise navigate in or on the Thames, to be awarded to a member who has been of most service to the club in the year. Davidge's stroking of the

Leander pair, which won the Goblets and then at the European Games at Dusseldorf, made him a perfect choice.

Since there was only one medal, the other half of the pair, Taj Leadley, perforce went unrewarded; but he was happily present to applaud his partner in those victories.

People and Words

One cannot help being old—but one can resist being aged.

—VISCOUNT SUMNER.

If people must pay their rates they should do so in surroundings of some beauty.

—PROFESSOR BASIL SPENCE.

It looks as though the House of Commons will retain the acres and Kings and send up to the House of Lords the queens and the knaves!

—VISCOUNT ESHER.

Television should be kept in its proper place—beside us, before us but never between us and the larger life—Sir ROBERT FRASER, I.T.A. Director-General.

We prepare for war like precocious giants and for peace like retarded pygmies.

—MR. LEVER, DEPUTY